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ABSTRACT

The rural community is characterized by a decreasing population and an eroding of local taxable wealth which contribute to the ineffectiveness of community agencies or institutions to serve citizens' needs. The rural community resists widespread effort to change existing conditions since rural people are generally conservative and often do not have the financial resources to solve indigenous problems. Although local boards of education are delegated the authority to determine educational policy, they rarely make decisions that might raise the ire of the local power structure. To a large degree, local educational programs are determined by the attitudes of local administrators, teachers, school board members, parents, and other adults in the community. Most administrators and teachers in rural areas are themselves products of the rural subculture and reflect the attitudes of the community in which they work. Education continues to be viewed as an expense rather than an investment, with the school being an agency for passing on the eternal verities rather than an agency for social change. The recent move toward the educational cooperative and an emphasis in administrator and teacher preparation programs on educational change and innovation are seen as constructive efforts to improve rural schools. (JH)

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ATTITUDES AND ORIENTATIONS OF RURAL GROUPS AND EFFECTS ON EDUCATIONAL DECISION-MAKING AND INNOVATION IN RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

A Synthesis of Research

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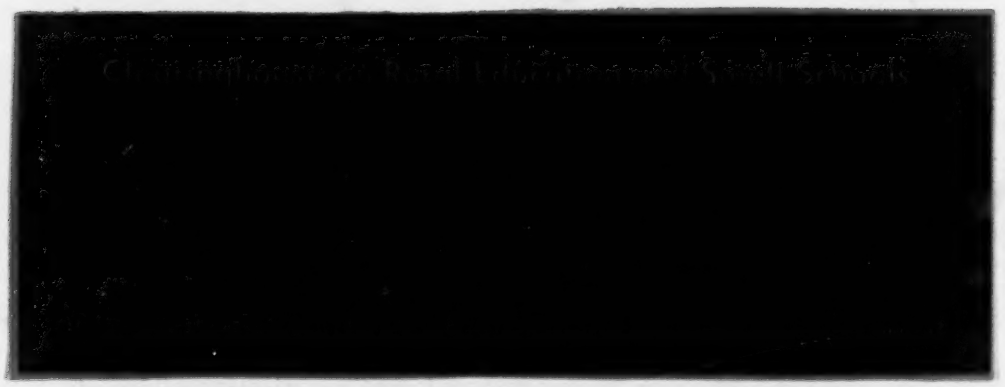

INTRODUCTION

School systems, like other societal institutions and agencies, do not exist apart from the society from which they derive. The school is not a completely closed or independent social system, despite a proclivity on the part of some individuals to act as though it is.

The school, its goals and objectives, and the manner in which it attempts to achieve these goals and objectives contribute to the conflicts in values and norms of the society. Too, the members of the school organization--pupils, teachers, administrators, board members--are themselves part of the larger society and, as members of the outside community, are actors <u>on</u> the school as well as actors <u>in</u> the school. This research synthesis will attempt to examine significant research and important literary products which have focused upon the effects which the attitudes of groups, within and without the school, have on school decision-making as it relates to educational change. The report is restricted to rural schools.

Goldhammer (24) provided focus to this study by describing the problem to be investigated:

> The school derives its support from the outside world.... The people who make or permit policy to be formed in the school live in the outside world and inevitably attempt to establish the compelling policies of the schools in conformity with desires and values particularly of that part of the world to which they subscribe (24:2).

As noted, this research synthesis is restricted to exploring the effects of attitudes and orientations of rural groups on rural schools. One problem in attempting such a monograph seems almost insurmountable; the "group" to be studied is very diverse. The temptation is to attempt to describe the rural community; the rural attitude; the rural American. Yet, rural regions differ in economy, in tradition, in ideology, in population makeup, and thus also in "attitudes and orientations." Rural areas are not uniformly backward, economically deprived, change-resistant--not uniformly different from the rest of society. In fact, when one considers the great technological advances in agricultural America, one gets a sense of a subculture greatly attuned to acceptance of change.

At the same time, rural America is not simply a collection of progressive farm communities with "amber waves of grain." It is a vast and varying Southwest and the extensive Appalachian region; it is Maine and Oregon. Further, there is racial and ethnic diversity within and without the regions. In short, rural areas are characterized by great wealth and technological advance on one hand and extreme poverty and resistance to change on the other. To be noted, however, is that technological advances have been related almost entirely to farm and extractive industries' practices, much less so to technological and qualitative advances in rural education. This is an interesting anomaly.

How is one to characterize rural life, with such evident regional and economic differences? More particularly, what areas are to be included as rural America? For the purposes of this study, the authors

adhered generally to the definitions of the U.S. Census Bureau. While these are helpful in a delimiting sense, they are only of general assistance in an "attitudes and orientations" study, especially in view of the previously noted diversity.

Thus, the authors also considered the concept of "community" in their inquiry (i.e., natural groupings of people in a given area resulting from the nature of their social and economic life). "Community" seems to have little to do with political boundaries. For the purposes of this monograph, "community" will include an area in which might be found the expression of a common culture, a manifestation of group life, and a population entity which can be classified. It will thus be considered to be a functional unit of social interaction rather than a result of man's proclivity to defined boundaries.

It can be seen that, under the preceding definition of community, many of what are often called communities are perhaps only in the process of becoming such if consideration is given to that aspect of the definition which deals with "expression of a common culture." Common culture does not exist in those areas of population flux where whole new residential developments have been created out of last week's farm land. This latter phenomenon does have great implication to the local school system, and has been productive of change, but is outside the purview of this study. The potential conflict as a result of the upheaval which occurs when a "sacred" community moves into transition to a "secular" community--a process to be observed in those areas of reasonable proximity to large cities--should continue to be the subject of much study, however.

This monograph concentrates on the sacred society manifest in much of rural America, not as a vestige certainly, but as it might be sharply differentiated from secular urban America. The "sharp differentiation" may, of course, be more apparent than real but does serve to give focus to the study.

There are four chapters comprising the monograph. Chapter I examines the nature of the rural community and the effects on educational decision-making. Chapter II focuses on research about rural teachers. Chapter III is concerned with the rural student. Chapter IV contains the summary and conclusions.

Chapter I

THE NATURE OF RURAL COMMUNITY GROUPS: EFFECTS ON EDUCATIONAL DECISION-MAKING

Introduction

The United States has become an urban society, with more than two-thirds of the population living essentially in an urban setting. Since World War II, the tremendous development of technology with its accompanying industrialization and mechanization has rapidly changed the nature of the total labor force. At the turn of the century, farmers and farm laborers made up 38 percent of the labor force. They now comprise about 7 percent of this force and continue to decrease (48). Nevertheless, agricultural production continues to rise.

As the occupational structure of American life has changed because of urbanization, industrialization, and technological advances, education has become increasingly important as a mode of socialization, as a mechanism for social mobility, and as an agency for providing its clients with necessary work skills.

The Rural Community

"Rural community" is usually thought of as having reference to a village or small town and its surrounding countryside. The people are usually considered to have strong common interests and are primarily dependent upon one another for social contact and for other necessary community activities. The rural community may be characterized by a dispersed population, an absence or deficiency of many public facilities and services, relatively weak governmental structures, a scarcity of

local leadership and expertise, and a conservative attitude about change (56:125).

Rural society continues to undergo a transition from a relatively simple group life characterized by informality and intimacy to one which is more formally organized, more impersonal, more complex. The technology which has helped to erase some of the differences in thought and behavior between rural and urban people has also increased their interdependence and has placed them in daily contact in many areas of the nation. Yet, in other regions a prevailing remoteness, often coupled with varying degrees of economic deprivation, keeps rural groups apart from the mainstream.

To illustrate the extent of change in the boundaries of many rural communities, an examination can be made of an early definition of these boundaries as they were in pre-automobile times:

> The country community is defined by the team haul. People in the country think of the community as that territory, with its people, which lies within the team haul of a given center. Very often at this center is [sic] a church, a school and a store, though not always, but always the country community has a character of its own. Social customs do not proceed farther than the team haul. Imitation, which is an accepted mode of social organization, does not go any farther in the country than the customary drive with a horse and wagon. The influence of leading rural personalities does not extend indefinitely in the country but disappears at the boundary of the next community. Intimate knowledge of personalities is confined to the community and does not pass beyond the team haul radius. Within this radius all the affairs of any individual are known in minute detail; nobody hopes to live apart from the knowledge of his neighbors; but beyond the community this knowledge quickly disappears. Men's lives are housed and their reputations are enriched by the boundary of the team haul.
>
> The reason for this is economic and social. The life of the country man is lived within the round of barter and of marketing his products. The team haul which defines the community is the radius within which men buy and sell. It is also the radius

within which a young man becomes acquainted with the woman he is to marry (83:91-2).

Thus it was. The "team haul community" became larger with better roads and transportation facilities. It became a neighborhood, and a cluster of neighborhoods became a new community, encompassing often a town as well as the outlying farms. But the community was still mostly rural-oriented, and basic values and attitudes could remain relatively unchanged.

But farming and other rural industries such as mining and lumbering did change. The same technology which caused the dissolution of the team-haul barrier has tended to increase the size of the economical agricultural industrial unit and to reduce, for example, the total number of farms. To continue the example, farming has become specialized, and the farm today that is "independent" is a rarity. Self-sufficiency is no longer characteristic of the farmer. A large family is no longer an economic asset and, although rural birth rates have generally kept pace with the rest of the country, rural offspring more often than not must seek their fortunes in nonfarm occupations.

The attitude that most rural areas are occupied predominantly by farmers is increasingly misleading. The census in many states shows that up to three of four employed males living in rural areas are employed in occupations other than farming. With increasing mechanization, computerized operations, consolidation of small farms, and influx of new residents seeking country air, this can be expected to increase.

As the nonfarming element increases in rural areas, occupational

diversity, by definition, grows; this results in situations where the chief task in the rural area is the integration of residents with many different interests and outlooks and perhaps a consequent redefinition and modification of common community goals. People may well reside in a rural community but not be of that community. The changed conditions make it quite possible for the rural-oriented family as well as the nonrural family to stand aloof--just as many urban families remain aloof, or denied from the life which surrounds them. This can even become a divisive force because of the varying interests and values.

Again, however, this diversity is less likely to exist as one moves into the rural heartlands and away from the more densely populated regions. It varies by geographic region, of course, but, in the main, one still finds a characteristic ideological unity in rural American communities, whether they are located in Texas, Tennessee, or Iowa. Although the ideology may differ somewhat between communities, within the community a general unity with respect to social orientations and values still most often can be found. The general out-migration patterns from many rural areas have only served to increase this.

Rural electrification, modern communications and transportation, the telephone, radio, and television have removed most rural communities from isolation from the rest of America. However, many rural communities and their institutions have not been able to keep pace or to share equally in the benefits of our nation's economic growth and technological changes.

Consequently, many rural communities find themselves with a continued eroding of their economic base as more people leave the area for the promises of a better life in the city. To a large degree, the urban plight of the inner city has a close relationship to problems in rural America (56:11-12).

At best, job opportunities in many rural areas are scarce. While some persons are able to commute to nonfarm jobs, the fact remains that many rural families, especially in rural poverty areas, do not make enough money to provide a decent living (56:5).

In order to make farming more profitable, farms are becoming increasingly larger and more mechanized. This means that many marginal farms are forced out of business or to levels of poverty. The result is increased migration to urban areas as opposed to existence in poverty as jobs become increasingly scarce. Nonfarm workers are usually employed in mining, forestry, or public and private service industries. These jobs, too, are declining in rural areas. The rural population as a whole has less wealth and more children than the cities and, although statistics indicate that America is becoming more urbanized, the problem of providing needed services is compounded rather than simplified as millions continue to live in rural areas (34:1). The 1970 national unemployment rate averaged 4.9 percent, while the rate in rural areas averaged 7.5 percent (86).

Rural Values and Attitudes

The basic structure of American democracy was forged in a predominantly rural setting by farmers and people in small towns.

"Rural residents have long been characterized as self-sufficient, rugged, pioneer-like and hardy" (33:19). These people are generally considered to be politically and economically conservative. A seeming strong sense of fair play prevails, and frugality, individual initiativeness, and a willingness to work "hard" are generally held to be characteristic. In many areas, religion tends to be of a fundamental nature, and negative attitudes sometimes exist about the value of play and other forms of recreation. Rural people tend to define large impersonal organizations--often found in the cities--as "unfriendly" (42:80).

Many communities remain steeped in a tradition which seems to forestall rapid change. Even communities in a state of flux many times evidence a "hard core" which clings to the old ways and attempts, sometimes quite successfully, to impede change. Custom, rather than reason, is often the basis of behavior and a characteristic of the sacred community structure.

The traditional pattern of rural life is the family unit--independent and self-sustaining--living on a farm, tilling the soil it owns, and taking pride in all it surveys. The close relationship between the farm as both a home and business necessitates close family cooperation and understanding (4). The rural child in such an environment learns early in life the values of work and thriftiness, and he is able to identify with the necessity and fruits of work since he often helps and observes the family working about him (69).
Yet, with the changing nature of society represented partly in the

continued decline of one-family farms, one might expect this picture to be much different really--certainly less characteristic, except in isolated regions, than was the case even twenty-five years ago.

Additional comments will be made about rural values and attitudes in other sections of this report, particularly in the section about decision-making practices.

The Rural Poor

Perhaps the dominant concern about rural life today is the abundance of poverty. Rural poverty has no geographic boundaries; it does not exclude any racial or ethnic group. During World War II, it was estimated that about 25 percent of America's prime draft-age males were unfit for unlimited military service. Among rural groups, the percentage "was one and one-half times as high (41.1 percent) as for the nation as a whole" (63:8). The most shocking realization, however, was that many of the deficiencies detected could have been corrected if they had been identified and treated properly during the early school years.

Most of the rural poor do not live on farms. They live in the open country, in rural villages, and in small towns. In 1964, it was estimated that some 54 million people lived in rural areas. One-third of all rural Americans (16,000,000) comprise the rural poor, who represent 46 percent of all impoverished Americans (2:349; 80:1).

In many rural poor areas, "(l)ocal governments, schools, and churches are dying from lack of support. And as local facilities and services continue to decline, the chances for redevelopment diminish"

(56:7). At the same time, however, rural communities and residents are demanding the same kinds of services as those offered in the cities.

While children from both prosperous and poor farm families will continue to leave the land in search of better opportunities elsewhere, the children of the poorer families will have the most difficulties in adjusting to their new environments.

Rural Education

Although rural areas vary in their abilities to support education, the per-capita income of farmers has been much less than that of the nonfarm population. In 1960 in the United States, average years of schooling for the urban population 25 years of age and over was 11.1 years; the average was 9.5 years for rural nonfarm people and 8.8 for rural farm people (56:41). Additionally, 19 percent of the urban population had some college education as compared with 11 percent for the rural population; more than 700,000 rural adults had never attended formal schools; 3.1 million had less than five years of schooling; and more than 19 million had not completed high school (56:41). The impact of these figures is modified, of course, by the fact that the rural population does reveal greater numbers of old people. (The young are out-migrants.) Nevertheless, there is a clear implication to be derived by educators and community leaders in rural areas: there is a great need for public adult education programs.

Often the curriculum of rural schools is fragmented, irrelevant, textbook-centered, and lacking in vocational offerings. There is an urgent need for adult educational offerings, changes in teaching methods,

and more specialized personnel to relieve teachers from clerical and other nonteaching duties (81:18).

The clientele of many small and rural schools consists of minority groups which have traditionally placed a low value on formal education (Negroes, Indians, migrant workers). Traditional educational offerings have not been meaningful or especially useful for these groups and, having served them poorly, the motivation to finish school is much lower with them than with other groups. Thus, an important "credential" for employment (i.e., the high school diploma) is not obtained, and the consequences are predictable. Waybright (81) reported that, in one rural Virginia school district, statistics reflected that 47 percent of first graders never graduate and 24 percent drop out at or before eighth-grade level. Among the dropouts, a large percentage is from families with annual incomes under $3,000. Similar studies have been conducted in other regions and similar findings have been issued.

In spite of the foregoing statements, many poor parents look upon school as a means of escape for their children from the hardship and privation imposed by rural life (30:16).

Rural and Small Community Decision-making Practices

> Change comes out of the interaction of people with the events they make, out of the desire to create with events even as they are occurring. We live within events, some being external to us, others being more immediate (60).

Reactions to events as described in the foregoing statement by Reichart are manifest in community decision-making. Many of the major decisions which affect poor rural communities are made at higher levels

in the society, often beyond the village or county boundaries.

In many rural areas where poverty, poorer health, and a lower standard of living exist, there seems also to exist a social ceiling to individual ambitions, along with a traditional attitude toward authority. The rural individual living in a community where everyone knows everyone is much more likely to remain within both the economic and the social norms of the group. Consequently, when approached by a person of power, the traditional attitude of many rural individuals is to acquiesce.

Also to be considered in decision-making practices in rural communities are the effects of a generally homogeneous community. Such a community is less likely to contain competing factors than is the heterogeneously composed urban community. The homogeneity, when combined with the conservativeness and lower educational level of rural people, tends to cause less tolerance of differing points of view, less acceptance of change.

Power Structures in Small Communities

> (I)n very small communities the notion of a very definite power structure which is generally tied in with local business and conservative in outlook is a likely reality. Such a view could be at least partly supported by the realization that most such communities lack the necessary range of educated and skilled persons to operate on the pluralistic basis of many people becoming involved, each person active in a very limited problem area (23:23-4).

Goldhammer and Farner (25:3) suggested that rural landowners having large areas often resist increases in property tax for whatever the purposes. This often affects educational institutions because in a rural

community the educational enterprise is most often the largest consumer of public dollars and is frequently involved in tax levies. This resistance to change is usually exemplified by an expressed belief in the "fundamentals"--only the tried and true with no experimentation (25:52). The establishment of a change, while the concern of all community members, usually requires the assent of a relatively few "prime movers" who have gained influence by virtue of position, inheritance, wealth, and other means.

The predominant power seems to reside in informal structures. In many rural communities, banking, legal, business, and sometimes religious groups have outweighed the "farm-block myth of power" (43:43-8).

There is some developing evidence, however, that a monolithic power structure is less characteristic of many rural communities than may have been the case formerly. Some members of what might be called the rural understructure have shown a remarkable ability to exert influence by unifying their fellows on given issues. The unionization of migrant workers in the West and the wresting of formal political control from whites by blacks in some southern counties and small towns serve as testimony to this. In neither of the examples given could the groups exerting influence be seen to have much potential for control by any standard measure but, because of a developing leadership structure, they do have much potential for unity and thus represent forces for change well outside the traditionally posited monolithic power structure.

Community Decision-making and the Schools

The purpose of the schools is education. Cason defined education as

> a process of socialization wherein children, youth and others take on value orientations, beliefs, social attitudes, character traits, knowledge and skills as are calculated to be important factors in perpetuating and improving upon the culture, in our case an American democratic way of life (13:269).

In a pluralistic community, the schools must serve many publics--each with its own values and orientations--to be understood and considered in the formulation of educational programs. In such a setting, the school's role--and especially that of the superintendent--becomes one of mediating conflicts between various competing pressure groups. This means that educational leaders must be able to work creatively with many publics that often may be pulling in conflicting or opposing directions (13:269-70). Hughes (36) suggested several implications for school administrators in terms of the nature of power in a community. Among others, he pointed out the importance of identifying key influentials and developing informal working relationships with these--not because they are always "right" but because they usually represent the best thinking of the community and are many times the individuals most influenced by a rational approach to community problem-solving.

In a small or rural community, with a rather monolithic power structure, the superintendent's role may be described as somewhat different from that of the superintendent in a larger city. Dahl (16) reported that, in one small town, three major sources

existed for initiating or vetoing policies involving the public schools: the mayor, the board of education, and the superintendent of schools.

However, when wide confidence is enjoyed by the superintendent and school policies do not affect negatively the political situation of the community, the superintendent, for the most part, has a great deal of autonomy as the chief power figure in the public schools. Gehlen (23) also reported that decisions to innovate in small or rural school districts are usually the prerogatives of the superintendent; however, "(w)ith a definite power structure it is relatively easy to anticipate the positions that are likely to be taken and to organize the schools so as to meet these preferences." The literature further suggests that economic issues are not likely to be settled by public debate and decision but are settled by members of the local power structure--usually against spending money--and the majority of the community usually accepts the decisions (23:31-4; 16).

Yet, Goldhammer (24:4-5) reported increasing evidence that the most important factor in the public acceptance of change is the image it has of the change advocate. Acceptance of change in the school setting varies according to who in the school organization proposes the change. In the Jackson County study (25), it was found that many citizens of the community placed more faith in the educational judgments of teachers with respect to changes than they did the administrators. Citizens became opposed to certain changes because of their contact with a few local teachers who were antagonistic to these changes. The citizens responded from the view that teachers

were the professional experts and administrators were not as well prepared to judge the merits of proposed innovations.

Vidich and Bensman (77) cited several studies which indicate that the school administrator or any professional educator removed from direct contact with children and parents is considered an "alien expert" who "knows the ways and laws of the world, and who uses this knowledge to shape the community as it bears on him and his ends which are necessarily in the selfish interests of education" (77:195) (emphasis supplied).

The typical school superintendent operates within the context of a political structure established by law and regulation. Most superintendents and boards of education prefer not to disturb or irritate the informal power group or groups less generally apparent but always perceived to be in the "background." Therefore, the safer course lies in doing just enough or as little as possible to keep things in a reasonable state of equilibrium. Control by the informal group can be exercised by the threat of coercion or force but may also be exercised simply by lack of support for any given issue (43:219; 37).

Professions are usually politically weak and vulnerable because of their economic relationships to the larger community generally and the power elite group in particular. Teachers, although a relatively sizable group within most communities, do not wield the power and influence of the lesser educated but more economically successful business leader. Teachers are generally expected to be good "neutral" citizens who are

uninvolved in controversies outside the schools. Most rural teachers can be expected to be politically, and probably educationally conservative. This may be largely because of existing habits in small communities of hiring "safe" persons like "our people" in values and outlook. Sharp (67), in his research, indicated several differences between rural teachers and urban teachers, among which was a greater conservatism in the former. One might say that teachers reflected the community in which they served (67:65-8; 23:25-6).

Local Schools and the Community

To function properly, a community must have organization and a systematic integration of activities in order to meet the needs of the individuals and groups residing therein. Smucker (72:275) submitted that a community is characterized by the following features: a population aggregate, a geographically defined area, a common mode of life, a group of need-serving agencies, a sense of identity and involvement, a social heritage, and a functional interdependence.

The well-being of a community is dependent upon a complex web of interrelated norms, and the breakdown of any facet of community life will have a profound effect on the community as a whole and will significantly affect other agencies or institutions and people in the community (72:277). The school, as one of the social institutions within the community, is unalterably interwoven with the community in numerous ways and to a large degree reflects the norms, ambitions, and desires of the community.

Many small and rural schools, usually being less adequately financed than their urban counterparts, tend not to change because of money, time, and inadequate staff for planning and training. Rural and small school staffs and faculties are usually older and are more limited in their contacts and exposure than the more cosmopolitan urban teachers (14:11). Yet Carlson concluded from his study of the adoption of certain innovative educational practices in two rural counties that the amount of money per child expended by the various school systems had a negative, insignificant correlation to the rate of adoption of change. That is, the amount of money which the district spent per child did not have any predictive power in relation to the rate of adoption (11:49-66). This does seem to indicate that change in rural schools may be related to something other than a restrictive budget.

Pafford (55)--in a study of innovations in twelve central Kentucky school systems--found, however, that there were significant relationships between (a) the quality of educational programs in schools where the faculties and administrators were innovative and amenable to change and (b) the amount of local revenue spent on education. Rajpal (57) conducted a study to determine the relationship between selected measures of educational quality and expenditures in public secondary schools in Iowa (grades 10-12), with the influence of school district size held constant. He concluded that, in order for small school districts to obtain equality of programs or curriculum, teaching staffs, etc., the expenditure of

funds would have to be substantially higher than in larger school districts (57:57).

Few rural and small school districts have a sufficient base to provide leadership and programs necessary for many of the essential services needed for a comprehensive educational program. This is true even with state support. In order to improve the efficiency of small schools, most states have set up intermediate school districts and/or have encouraged the consolidation of small school systems and units into larger ones for increased effectiveness.

Small schools also tend to have a shortage of resources other than dollars. Even if money were suddenly made available to equalize educational opportunities and to correct deficiencies of small schools, the specialized personnel needed, the specialized spaces, materials, equipment, etc. would not be available (34:1). While school reorganization is not a panacea, it will tend to reduce striking discrepancies in the wealth of school districts and will provide conditions under which an effective and efficient program can come into being more readily.

As migration from rural areas continues, school reorganization must be considered as well as reorganization of rural areas with urban areas and/or suburban areas (3:77; 39). Resistance to school district reorganization is caused by one or more of the following reasons: fear of loss of local control, loss of neighborhood school and transporting "kids" too far from home, weakened vested interest (personal and financial), increased school taxes and decreased level

of services, lessened school-home relationships, and a seriously weakened or destroyed community (3:11).

Societal changes and the resultant new demands on educational systems require the consideration of new ways of restructuring aspects of school organization to provide more effective and efficient educational programming. Many forces provide impetus for change, but the problem remains: how best to organize to provide for socially responsive systems to help ensure quality education in a mass, technologically oriented society.

The problem is both rural and urban. The multiplicity of agencies in urban areas suggests the need for new larger structures for educational governance to provide greater coordination with related community organizations. Yet, there is pressure for accountability, decentralization, and "local" control. Inadequate financing and insufficient pupil population are forcing rural school districts to organize differently in order to obtain services which singly they cannot provide; yet, again, there is pressure to remain independent and unique to the community served.

Hughes and Achilles (39) conducted a comprehensive study which inquired into the nature of formal educational cooperatives and which resulted in development of a taxonomy of cooperatives. These workers concluded that educational cooperatives offer a most promising solution to the dilemma of the small school district, yet at the same time permitting some local autonomy to remain.

Until recently, the predominantly used alternative in rural

districts has been consolidation. However, the intermediate school district and/or the educational cooperative are seen by many educators and citizens as better alternative solutions (39; 22). Cooperative arrangements identified and reported in the study by Hughes and Achilles (39) included intermediate educational service agencies, voluntary educational cooperatives, school development councils, and school-industry cooperatives as being among the most important.

These cooperative centers provide a focus for such activities as program development, planning, state and Federal project development and implementation, and working with community groups, in addition to the usual kinds of shared educational services. The cooperative also provides a single location for foundations and other organizations to work directly with a number of school districts. Federal legislation has provided some impetus for cooperation. Funds from Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, in particular, have been used for development of planning regions on a state-wide basis (e.g., in Texas and Kentucky). There is a trend for the development of regional agencies to be designed on the basis of travel distance, socioeconomic similarities, and numbers of pupils which can be served most effectively and efficiently rather than following county boundaries or being conterminous with other political boundaries.

Some states and local districts are establishing cooperatives which, in effect, are created and controlled by the local part-

icipating districts. That is, the cooperative is formed under the control of the local agency, not as a part of the hierarchy between the local and state levels (39).

The Great Plains School District Organization Project (27-29), completed in 1968, represents another attack on the problems of the small school district. The project focused on school district and state department of education reorganization in Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota. The recommendations issuing from this study are still largely unimplemented, however.

Summary and Conclusions

This section will attempt to summarize the general attitudes and orientations of the rural community and of dominant rural groups which affect decisions about education and educational change.

The Rural Community

The rural community, for the most part, is characterized by a decreasing population and an eroding of local taxable wealth, which contribute to the ineffectiveness of community agencies or institutions in serving the citizens' needs. Poverty and all of its related problems abound in rural America. In many areas, the standard of living is quite low; jobs are scarce and continue to decline in number and variety.

The rural community, with a generally prevailing monolithic power structure, resists widespread efforts to change existing conditions

that might not be in its own best interest. Nearby urban and suburban areas have not been very responsive to rural needs, even though many urban problems can be traced to existing rural problems. There is some developing evidence, however, that in some areas the traditional power structure is being threatened by understructure groups which have developed a high potential for unity.

Rural people are generally conservative and often do not have the financial resources to solve indigenous problems. Leadership and expertise to solve local problems do not appear to exist in many rural communities. Out-migration of young potential leaders complicates this problem. Outside help or "experts" are likely to be resisted; the "stranger-expert" is suspect. This is also true of school reorganization efforts if imposed from the outside. Iannaccone (40) described most rural communities as "sacred communities" to varying degrees. Sacred communities are characterized by a minimization and unanimity of decision-making, and a low tax ideology (40:35).

Local Boards of Education

Although the local boards of education are delegated the authority to determine local school board policies, seldom do they entertain actions or decisions that might raise the ire of the local power structure. At present, boards of education cannot normally be expected to be a strong force for influencing or for determining local educational innovations except as legitimizing agents.

Local School Administrators

The local public schools' educational programs should be

determined by the needs, interests, and capacities of the clients. To a large degree, however, these programs are determined by the attitudes of local administrators, teachers, school board members, parents, and other adults in the community.

According to Brickell's study (10), public reluctance to support better educational programs is not a factor inhibiting professional staffs which are eager to change. The local school administrator may be a key factor for change in local schools. He is powerful as a change agent because he is in a position to marshal the necessary authority and to exert the necessary leadership to facilitate decisions for change. Once a decision for change has been made, he must also provide necessary support (staff, materials, time) if the change is to become permanent.

Iannaccone (40) reported that the superintendent's role appears to be the key to the school district's rate of educational innovation. The positive factors related to his innovativeness are his amount of formal training, social relationships with peer superintendents, participation in professional meetings, prestige in the profession among peers, and the extent to which he depends upon outside sources for advice and information (40:230). Again, however, Goldhammer's research (24) serves to modify these conclusions.*

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*An interesting program to prepare "school administrator/change agents" which seems to take cognizance of the political and social realities in rural areas has been developed at the University of Tennessee. Essentially, it has the local community identify its potential school leaders and, with the aid of Federal funds from the Education Professions Development Act, provides a 15-month resident administrator preparation program. The participant commits himself to return to the district, and the district commits itself to place the individual in an administrative leadership position at the completion of the 15 months (38).

Brickell perhaps hit on the dominant position held by many local school administrators:

> Like the teachers, the administrator has a stake in maintaining stability so that traditional results can be produced. He must also be particularly responsive to demands for new kinds of results. Schools are usually structured so that the chief administrator can be kept responsible to external demands. The superintendent serves in a contract relationship to a lay board of education. Even before new demands are expressed locally, an administrator who sees nearby schools like his own making structural changes may anticipate the local pressures which are to come and move in advance to meet them (10:20).

Chapter II

ATTITUDES OF RURAL TEACHERS

As previously noted, rural teachers tend to come from similar backgrounds. They very often operate in classrooms with inadequate materials and equipment and wide differences among their pupils, with less than adequate supportive service. The average rural teacher's formal educational attainment is one to two years less than that of city teachers.

Some educators claim that rural teachers need no special training since the goals of education are the same whether the client is localized in a city or on a farm--and therefore that there is no such thing as rural education. However, Works and Lesser (84:148) and Dawson (17:441) agreed that rural teachers do face special problems in formulating instructional programs and methods geared to the experience, interest, and needs of their pupils.

Hughes (38:1-2; 37:2-3) cited the need for new kinds of administrator preparation programs which not only take cognizance of problems indigenous to Appalachia but which also attend to the political realities of the area. He noted that "the realities of recruitment of administrators to function in schools in southern Appalachia are such that primarily local teachers working in those schools provide the best (and perhaps, only) leadership source" (38:1). Further, he noted that

> Endemic to southern Appalachia, as well as to many other areas of the nation, is a history of selecting

> school administrators and educational leaders through a political process which has not always recognized professional expertise. This situation fosters minimal entrance requirements for school administrators. There is subsequently created a pool of beginning administrators...with little professional competence and skill (38:3).

To a large degree, there is evidence that this same set of characteristics exists in many other rural areas. A further citation might include similar programs, located at New Mexico State University and the University of Texas, based upon many of the same assumptions.

Attitudes of Rural Teachers Toward Change

Teachers generally appear to be "here-and-now" oriented. They appear to be more concerned with the many pressing problems at hand rather than looking at long-range implications of what they are doing and of events around them (67:77 et seq.). Consequently, change is threatening to their existence as teachers, and they rationalize rather than evaluating, incorporating, and preparing for future changes.

Many rural teachers view their rural clients, especially the poor, as being unwilling or unable to learn--despite the many studies and demonstrations that disprove this. These views are similar to some urban teachers' attitudes about the disadvantaged city child. Both groups of teachers tend to blame the parents and the children for teacher failure and classroom difficulties (9:75; 56:42). As early as 1944, at the White House Conference on Rural Education, it was noted that the poor showing of many rural youth on college entrance examinations and standardized intelligence and school achievement tests had

all been unjustly used to support invalid theories of rural inferiority.

The Kettering Foundation and Gallup International, Inc. conducted a nation-wide study to assess attitudes among parents, school board members, and educators (teachers and administrators) regarding thirteen educational innovations. All fifty states and varying sizes of communities were involved. Some of the findings included the following:

1. Each group described itself as least likely to resist change in the local schools and the enemy of change is the 'general public' (58:10).

2. Resistance to change is greatest in what might be described as the mechanics of education. Sixty-eight percent of parents, 51 percent of board members, and 57 percent of educators were opposed to lengthening of the school year. Of all groups, teachers were most opposed and superintendents were most in favor (58:12).

3. The innovation with the least support among all three groups had to do with changing the prevailing pupil reporting or grading system and "pass-fail" in order to eliminate competition. Eighty-three percent of parents, 78 percent of board members and 66 percent of educators opposed (58:12).

The entire study seemed to support the premise that education should not be considered the sacred province of schools and that a proper mix of responsibility for pupils' education needs to be reestablished to include home and other institutions and groups. Much interagency coordination is suggested. Also, the schools of the future will tend to pay more attention to the development of mental skills, as well as concentration and more independent study (58:10-12).

Both Tobias (85) and Vroon (79) reported that teachers were most opposed to the application and use of educational media innovations which represented direct competition to their traditional roles

in the classroom. Tobias concluded that teachers were more favorable to audiovisual aids requiring the presence of a teacher (85:103-7):

> Clearly, fear of automation among teachers is easily attached to media other than those related to programmed instruction once the term implies direct competition with the teachers (85:107).

Vroon further concluded (a) that teachers who perceive their role as presenters of knowledge tend to be more dogmatic than those who perceive their role as guiding and directing pupil acquisition of knowledge and (b) that attitudes toward terms suggesting automated and nonautomated instructional media were not significantly related with personal, experiential, or educational characteristics of the teacher. Significance, however, was approached between attitudes toward automated media and the number of years since receiving the last academic degree or certificate and years of experience (79:59-60).

Tobias' study involved a heterogeneous group of 115 teachers enrolled in graduate classes pursuing the master's degree. Vroon's study involved teachers in two rural counties in Tennessee.

Brickell's study (10) concluded that "the most persuasive experience a school person can have is to visit a successful new program and to observe it in action" (10:27). Speeches, literature, research reports, etc. are relatively ineffective. However, anything abnormal, unreal, or artificial in the circumstances surrounding the observed program will defeat the purpose of the visit. The teacher is then likely to conclude that "the program cannot be duplicated in his own school or that if duplicated it might fail" (10:29). Consequently,

rural teachers visiting urban or suburban innovative programs are not likely to see these as readily adaptable to the rural setting.

It usually takes teachers from four months to a year to accept new programs. Time and successful experiences with the program seem to be deciding factors; however, the more radical the change in content or method, the more likely teachers are to resist because of feelings of inadequacy (10:31).

Beilin (7) conducted a study in rural southern Minnesota to determine attitudes of teachers toward pupils' schooling opportunities and differences in farm and urban children's needs. Results indicated that teachers felt the need for more guidance services and vocational programs and broader program opportunities for all children. Few teachers would say "yes" to rural children's needs and school services as being different from urban children (7:181-6).

Evans' inquiry (21) among rural teachers in California found that a majority of the teachers in his study were relatively well satisfied with working conditions, pupil-teacher relations, program offerings, professional freedom, and social and educational opportunities available to them (21:3715). Discontent may not be characteristic of teachers in rural areas, and this may have implications in relation to efforts for change. One must be cautious in generalizing, of course, but Sharp's study (67), among others, is also suggestive of this.

In any case, without administrative support, teachers comprise a rather powerless group in terms of effecting changes outside the classroom and cannot be expected to support change or an innovative program

unless they are involved in decision-making at all levels of the planning, implementation, and evaluation (10:24,35).

Chapter III

RURAL SCHOOL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Very often, the efforts of the public schools seem to be based upon assumptions which are not valid for all children. The values of the teacher and the very purpose of schooling may not be appropriate for some children. As noted previously, many rural students fail to complete their schooling through high school graduation. The rural average of school completion is below that of the nation as a whole. Although a wide range in quality and quantity of schools, school services, and economic levels exists in rural areas, there are more marked differences in the educational levels of rural and urban residents, of whites and nonwhites, of various socioeconomic groups, and of residents in different sections of the country (64:132; 53:113).

Most rural young people are unable to find farm jobs when they enter the labor market; therefore, the choice seems to exist between under-employment on farms, in rural areas, or in small towns, or movement to urban areas for employment (64:134). Likely, the latter choice is made, and such movement further complicates urban problems because, very often, rural young people are unable to compete favorably with urban young people for employment. Rural youths frequently have lower educational and occupational aspirations, fewer saleable skills, less training, lower value orientation, and fewer salient personality characteristics

to compete adequately—except for jobs at the lower end of the continuum (46:57). The more highly organized life of urban areas also causes problems since rural young people have socialized in an environment which is controlled "more by how neighbors will react than by what the regulations say" (4).

Numerous studies have indicated the relationship between the amount of school acquired by parents and their economic status as being related to the amount of schooling acquired by their children. Next to the home, the school ranks as the most important agency in shaping a child's life. Yet, very often, attendance laws are poorly enforced in rural areas.

Bloom (9:5) and Hildebrand (34:15) agreed, however, that the disadvantaged youths of urban or rural areas are both seriously deprived of educational opportunities and are the recipients of all other negative effects thereof. Furthermore, the disadvantaged child suffers increased frustrations and rejection and failure as he gets older and continues to attend school (9:20-1). The commonly held idea that the disadvantaged are not interested in schooling is not so. Although the rural school dropout may differ from the urban school dropout, the consequences are the same--high unemployment and small earnings (64:131).

Rural youths who graduate from high school are less likely to plan to attend college than those who live in larger communities, and students who live on farms are less likely than nonfarm students to

plan to go to college. This might be explained by the general feeling among rural youths who plan to farm for a living that a college education is not necessary for success.

Research suggests that the relative size of the community of orientation affects an individual's training, opportunity, perceptions of the occupational structure, and aspirations--therefore serving to increase or decrease one's chances for a good position in the occupational structure. With urban areas "it is important to note, however, that the advantage is concentrated in the sons of the working class" (47:206).

Lower-class urbanites are likely to secure more education than their rural counterparts. This is perhaps due to the proximity of educational opportunities at all levels and to the wider visibility of occupational possibilities (47:219-20). Middle-class youths, both urban and rural, are likely to have higher occupational aspirations due to family and peer-group influences. In smaller communities, the children of middle-class parents tend to form tighter peer groups controlled along class lines. This is equally true of other social groups; however, in larger communities, young people are better able to escape the rigid confines of the social structure--and many do (47:225). All of these factors suggest that rural children of the non-manual class of working parents are more likely to be exposed to more imperatives for middle-class behavior and motivation than their rural counterparts (47:222-3).

> The implication of these analyses of the situation of middle class youth is that the motivational advantages and

> objective opportunities of those who grow up in a large city are counterbalanced by the motivational pressures induced by the rigidities of the status system of smaller communities. On the other hand, among working-class youth, the rigidities of small-town structure will probably operate to reinforce the liabilities flowing from the working-class status of the family (47:225).

Often, children of lower socioeconomic status who attend the same schools as middle-class children will have lower aspirations and a higher dropout rate than their middle-class peers. Seidel (65) suggested that the attitudes of school officials might contribute to this situation. Attitudes of parents toward school and their children are also major factors affecting attitudes of children.

Many rural youths experience difficulty in school. Sewell (66), in a study conducted in Wisconsin, reported that rural students (a) generally rank below the urban student in measured intelligence, (b) find high-school work less interesting, (c) place less value on education, (d) (especially farm youth) are less likely to follow a college-preparatory curriculum, (e) are less likely to go to college, and (f) are less likely to apply for college scholarships. Because of their limited experiential background, native dialect, or the speaking of a foreign language, difficulties are often evident in learning to read with middle-class-oriented books based on standard English. These factors combine to make the transition from auditory signs for language symbols to the visual signals (reading) most difficult. This situation does not represent illiteracy but an incongruence between a child's experiences and the unrealistic expectations and methods very often utilized in rural schools (70:32-3).

Although not mentioned previously, perhaps the most disadvantaged of all children in America are the children of migrant workers--including Spanish-speaking Americans, Negroes, native whites, Puerto Ricans, and some American Indians. Moreover, it is estimated that nearly 1,000,000 persons are considered migrant workers, with 320,000 to 500,000 children under the age of eighteen. Of this number, 175,000 to 225,000 of these children move with their families (76:5).

Thirty-one of the states have migratory workers numbering 4,000 or more annually. The migrant children are usually retarded in school achievement for many reasons: frequent moves, poor school attendance, lack of acceptance in some communities, lack of parental educational achievement, language barriers, lack of local enforcement of school attendance and child labor laws, need for special programs to meet their needs, lack of transportation, poorly trained teachers, and insufficient funds of some school districts.

Summary

It seems clear that America can no longer afford to ignore the quality or quantity of educational opportunities available to its children, regardless of where they may reside. The fluidity of our society mandates this. If the multitudinous problems faced by rural school children and rural society are to be solved, all governmental and private agencies and citizens must cooperate in new and creative ways to improve the economic, educational, and social conditions existing in too many rural areas. Unless this is done, it is doubtful

that we can ever solve the problems of urban areas, which, in many ways, comprise a part of the same continuum.

Although the research cited in this section of this report represents a limited sample indeed--due in part to a paucity of recent research in this area--it is perhaps representative of some of the differences which exist among rural youths with respect to their families, themselves, their ambitions, and education.

Chapter IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This monograph has focused on the effects of various rural groups' attitudes toward educational decision-making and change. For convenience, the report has been divided into three parts; however, the difference in subject matter is one largely of emphasis rather than independence of topic.

Rural sociology has a rich history of research focusing on the processes of change and the diffusion of innovations. [An excellent source for a beginning search of such studies is Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation (61).] Unfortunately for the present monograph, however, much of the rural sociological research about change has not been directed toward the rural school but rather has inquired into the adoption rates of various changes in farming and farm technology.

Such studies have resulted in an agricultural change model espoused by Rogers. The six steps in the change process leading to adoption of a particular innovation are well known. Also basic to agricultural change in the United States have been the activities of the agricultural extension agent.

No such "agent for change" or agency for change as the extension agent exists for the educational enterprise, either in rural areas or urban areas. Elements of the Rogers' model have been suggested for educational systems, however. Brickell made an effort in this direction in Organizing New York State for Educational Change (10). One of the essentials of Brickell's model was the demonstration school:

a school not unlike those which were near it, either in clientele or in financial resources. This school was to serve as a center in which to implement new ideas issuing from research and, because of its proximate visibility, would serve the same purpose as the corner field of hybrid corn. Not much has come of the idea in any kind of organized way but, in the opinion of the authors of this monograph, the conception would still seem to be a promising one, especially in view of research which seems to indicate that more people are persuaded to change by their neighbors than by a far-off (in physical or psychological distance) font of knowledge.

The agricultural change model is, of course, not completely isomorphic when applied to education. In education, one deals with a system rather than single consumers of ideas, with an organization rather than individuals. Organizational change is somewhat more complex than individual change.

It is nevertheless somewhat anomalous when one does find in prosperous rural communities a generally ready acceptance of the newest in farm technology--an eager acceptance of innovative procedures--and in these same communities to find also a school curriculum representative of the Boston Latin Grammar School, with "vo-ag" often as the sole additive. Institutions do change less rapidly than individuals, of course, and individuals, even those most willing to accept a new fertilizer which promises a greater corn crop, are seemingly less willing to accept dramatic change in school practice.

The easy generalization is to blame conservative school

administrators and teachers, and even more conservative colleges of education--to accuse these groups of professionals of living in the past and of being unresponsive to current needs. Yet, studies do show that most administrators and teachers in rural areas are themselves more often than not products of the subculture they serve and seemingly reflect the attitudes of the community in which they work. While not entirely unheard of, it is uncommon enough to mention that the product of the Bronx rarely ends up teaching in Pocatello. Other studies indicate the influence of local lay influentials upon decision-making practices in the school. Thus it would appear that the educational system serving rural America is somewhat reflective of the desires and attitudes of the community in which it is located. Even cursory examination of the schools normally indicated as "beacon lights" of innovation by such agencies as the Institute for the Development of Educational Activities rarely includes schools from rural areas.

This report may have seemed to have focused on rural poverty areas and may have stressed rural poverty as a contributing factor in the amount and nature of change in rural school systems. This was not intended; there are areas of great wealth in rural America, and it would be misleading to suggest otherwise. However, this wealth frequently does not appear to be shared with the school system or other community welfare systems serving those areas; in addition, as suggested previously, these areas frequently are not even on the cutting edge of educational innovation.

Running the risk of outcries from those who would cite such historical phenomena as the Populist Movement, the authors of this monograph would suggest that there continues to exist in much of rural America a basic conservatism--a sacred society in the sociological sense--which is pervasive and which influences attitudes toward changes in the institutions of that part of America, whether the area is rich or poor in material or natural resources. There does exist a suspicion of too much "newness" in the schools, or of "outside expert advice." It is there and it is observable. The nature of the sacred society thus does account for a general lack of innovativeness in the social institutions--any particular community's general acceptance of technological advances in those things which it views as bringing in more individual income notwithstanding to the contrary.

The fact is, of course, that education continues to be viewed, despite the work of economists such as Schultz (68), as an expense rather than as an investment; in the rural community, education is viewed as an agency for passing on the eternal verities rather than as an agency for social change. It is perhaps tautological thus to indicate that a review of studies would indicate that social change (i.e., change in the nature of society, of its institutions, of the farm community) is least desirable of all in view of the rural resident--unless one talks with certain indigents.

A Look at Future Change

One feature of small towns and rural areas which continues to be

highly valued is local control of its institutions. (There is evidence that this is valued by many urban groups too, and accounts in part for the hue and cry for "decentralization.") Developing out of the desire to continue local control while at the same time achieving some of the obvious benefits of the services of a larger school unit has been the recent move toward the educational cooperative. It seems to promise hope for the improvement of rural educational systems with less locally perceived threat than the "consolidated school."

Such organizations as the permissive unmandated educational cooperative now developing in Appalachia, the mandated Regional Service Centers of Texas, and the semivoluntary Educational Service Centers of Nebraska, as well as other types of arrangements throughout the nation, represent attempts to improve education in rural areas through shared leadership and services while at the same time maintaining a large degree of local autonomy.

Some further inroads into improvement of rural schools are being made by administrator and teacher preparation programs in certain colleges and universities serving largely rural areas (New Mexico State University, University of Tennessee, and University of Texas among others). The effort is generally directed toward preparing persons who will return to their homes or similar types of communities to be agents for change, the assumption being that since they are of the community they are less likely to encounter immediate rejection of innovative procedures. The Appalachian Regional

Commission, a Federally funded agency serving thirteen eastern states, has been devoting much of its energies and resources to such activities, as well.

A Final Word

This monograph has attempted to cover a vast territory. In many instances, the authors felt like the proverbial blind men trying to describe an elephant. Nevertheless, certain conclusions have been advanced based upon the best available data. Hopefully, many readers will find in this monograph a source which will lead them to conduct further inquiries into the nature of change in rural school systems. It is, in the final analysis, a subject which needs much additional research.

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